

## WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING

Caregiver Programs have been overlooked for many years and now as the Older American's Act newest program the Alabama Cares which is part of the National Family Caregivers Support Program provides services to many of our care givers much in need. I come as not only the Director but also as a caregiver myself for a 90-year-old man and an 80 year old. The services that we provide includes respite, information, counseling, assistance and supplemental services. While the program is vital there is not enough dollars in the program to really make an affect. Some of the services that we provide are supplemental service such as depends, bedpans, and diapers. Under assistant technology we provide special eating utensils, special utensils for seniors to dial the phone as well as to hear, and we provide a medic alert system. Under home modification we can provide wheel chair ramps and grab bars. Under chore services we provide lawn care and moving heavy furniture. Under homemaker we provide housecleaning, preparing meals and four our grandparents program we provide school uniforms, supplies and respite. Caregivers are on a fixed income and have to decide many times to use the money either for respite or supplement services. I want to give you an example of just how much this program helps and just how little the caregivers receive in comparison to another funded state programs such as the Medicaid Waiver Program. Most of our caregivers receive approximately \$1,200 a year that's for each client and they get about 2 hours of respite per week. Also, Medicaid spends about \$1,000 per month for their clients, while the Alabama Cares is \$100 per month. The majority of our clients are reaching the age of 80 or higher so you can see the need is great. I want to give you an example of one of the caregivers that we are helping. A gentlemen that is caring for his wife who has Alzheimer's and his wife does not recognize him. He cannot bath her, she fights with him, so he has to hire a female worker in order to bath her. Another example is that we have a caregiver who works, has a young family and is caring for her mother who is still living in her own home. The client is the only child, and only gets help with housework. She has to do the rest such as errands, laundry, shopping, providing transportation, meals, and taking care of her business, on top of doing her own. We feel that one of the things that need to be decreased is the match for this program. We feel that it is too high. This program improves greatly the relationship between the caregiver and the recipient. And it does that because it relieves stress and helps the frail caregiver to bathe and lift, further reducing stress. We have done some things to partner with AARP such as our grandparent support groups by offering seminars. We also partnered with food banks to provide food for those individuals who cannot get out of the house. The caregiver/coordinator goes to pick up the food and delivers it to the home. Our waiting lists are long and we ask that you provide additional funding. When I talked to caregiver coordinators they said we just need more money. So please look at that when you reauthorize the OAA.